

Workforce Investment Act State Plan Executive Summary

The enactment of the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, as the first wholesale reform of the nation's job training system in more than 15 years, provides unprecedented opportunity for major reforms that will result in a reinvigorated, integrated workforce investment system. Kentucky's vision for the Workforce Investment Act is comprised of four major characteristics: universal, seamless, customer-focused, and performance-based. To accomplish this vision it will be necessary to: **refocus** workforce and economic development efforts through a commitment to a comprehensive strategic plan that addresses customer needs, and **redesign** an effective universal structure and service delivery system that is accessible to all and supported with state-of-the-art technology.

Kentucky's state workforce investment board will be constituted as a new entity with 25 members and 51 percent representation by business and industry. The board will assist in the development of the statewide workforce investment system. Following a process that included public comment, discussions with local officials, and the recommendation of the state board, eleven local workforce investment areas were designated by the Governor. Each area will have a local board appointed by the chief local elected official and comprised of 51 percent representation by business and industry.

The workforce investment system is the primary mechanism through which the strategic economic and workforce development goals will be attained. A statewide one-stop system will be the vehicle to deliver local services. Three tiers of local responsibility for one-stop systems are the establishment of a local workforce investment board, designation of one-stop operators by the local board, and selection of both required and optional one-stop partners. Adults, dislocated workers, and youth aged 18-21 may receive core, intensive, and training services. Core services (individual assessment, job search, placement assistance) are universally available to all customers at the one-stop center. Intensive services (comprehensive assessment, development of individual employment plan, case management) are available to persons unable to obtain employment as a result of receiving core services. Intensive services may be provided by one-stop partners or may be contracted to an outside entity. Training services, limited to eligible individuals unable to obtain employment as a result of receiving intensive services, may include

occupational skills training, on-the-job training, and customized training. These services are made available through providers certified by the local workforce investment board.

Recognizing that customer choice is an essential ingredient of the redesigned workforce investment system, individuals access training services through the use of individual training accounts. Consequently, it is essential that customers have ready access to information about eligible training providers and their performance. Training providers must be certified as eligible by the local board, then are placed on the state-maintained eligibility list. Initial eligibility is extended to institutions which are eligible to participate in federal student financial aid programs and those institutions which operate registered apprenticeship programs. Continued eligibility for providers is based on performance and cost measures. Initially, the state has chosen to adopt the required performance measures: entry into unsubsidized employment, retention in unsubsidized employment six months after entry, earnings received in unsubsidized employment six months after entry, attainment of a recognized credential relating to achievement of educational skills, customer satisfaction as measured by employers and participants. These measures form the basis of a progression of accountability beginning with service providers, then continuing through the one-stop operator and the local workforce investment area, and culminating at the state level.

Youth (aged 14-21) services are available to persons who are economically disadvantaged and meet one or more additional criteria such as school dropout, individual with disabilities, basic skills deficient, homeless or runaway, offender. While the Kentucky Education Reform Act recognized the importance of the connection between education and employment, the WIA enhances this concept by increasing opportunities to design programs to prepare youth for employment. Program coordination and linkages between secondary and postsecondary education institutions allow students to translate course work taken at the secondary level in fields such as introductory computer-related skills and child care into postsecondary programs. Employment opportunities available during the summer as well as the school year will contribute to the preparation of youth for the workforce.

An information technology network is crucial to the effective functioning of the workforce investment system. The information technology system has two major components: 1) access to information (either self-directed or staff-

assisted) on jobs, educational programs and services to assist customers in making informed choices; and 2) collection of demographic data and a method to track customers in order to evaluate outcomes. The system should also have the capability to generate the required federal reports. EMPOWER Kentucky's Simplified Access project will assist in the development of a comprehensive information system.